

A Present from the author

*New York
July 7 1792*

A

TREATISE

ON

FEBRIS ASTHENICA GRAVIS,

OR THE

SEVERE ASTHENIC CONTINUED FEVER.

BY

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OBSCURIS OMNIBUS REJECTIS.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY HARRISSON & PURDY, No. 3,
PECK-SLIP.

M.DCC.XCI.



To LEWIS FAUGERES, Esquire,

Surgeon and Practitioner of Physic, New-York.

Honoured Sir,

THE gratitude I owe you for the liberal aid which you have always afforded me, when in the pursuit of science is sufficient, independent of any other consideration, to induce me to offer you the following Treatise. On perusing it, you will find I have considered, under the same head, a variety of phenomena or symptoms, which, by many Physicians, are imagined to constitute very different and opposite diseases: In this I trust I have followed nature, instead of being misled by the false and unnatural distinctions every where to be found in systems of modern nosology. The taste for dividing diseases into a variety of species hath descen-

ded from Aristotle, who taught men, with silly pains, to subtilize away sense in terms and distinctions, when no difference in nature exists. If it hath been found from experiment and observation, that two diseases (as they are commonly imagined to be) have been produced by the same cause, and both afterwards cured by the same remedy, would it not be absurd to suppose them to be different, merely because the symptoms were not alike in both ?

THE evidence, by which I have been led in my enquiries on this subject (and the only kind of evidence that can lead directly to truth and certainty in medicine) is that, which appeared on maturely considering both *cause* and *effect*.

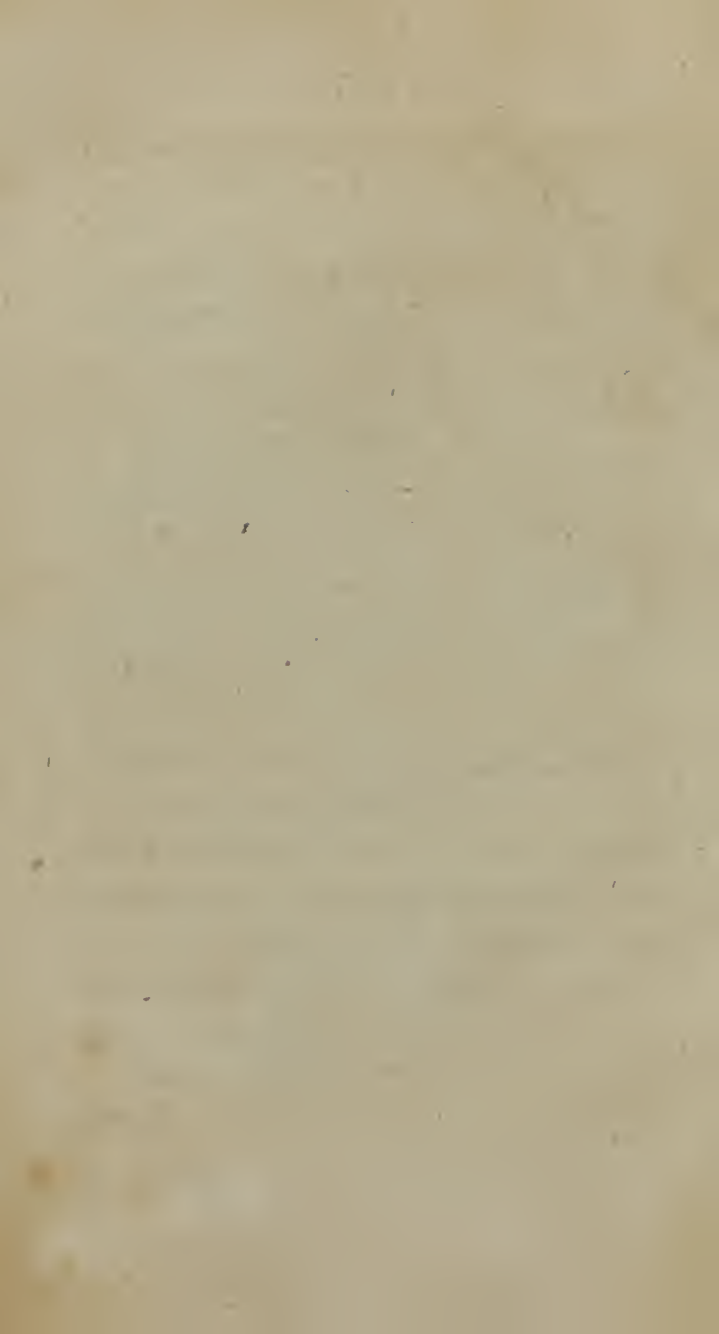
THE method of cure which is recommended is somewhat different from any that has been hitherto proposed, yet I trust you will not reject it on that account, but first make trial of the plan which is pointed out, and if it proves not more prosperous than the common practice of treating the disease, I will willingly accept of a better.

I cannot, in justice to myself, conclude this dedicatory part, without acknowledging my obligations to Doctor Gibbons, for the advantages I have received from his valuable lessons in both the theory and practice of Medicine.

*I have the honor, Sir, to be
your much obliged and
dutiful Son,*

PETER FAUGERES.

New-York, 1791.





A TREATISE, &c.

DR. SYDENHAM hath justly observed, that in writing the history of a disease, every manifest and natural phenomenon should be faithfully and accurately described, while every hypothesis, which may have prepossessed the writer in its favour, ought to be totally laid aside.

With this idea therefore, I proceed to write the history of a disease, considering it improper to separate the necessary, peculiar and constant phenomena or symptoms, which would constitute the definition, from the common, natural, and accidental ones, which ought to be comprehended in the general history.

I begin with a description of what has been denominated the Typhus Mitior, or slow Nervous Fever, and shall proceed to what I consider only higher degrees of the same disease, but known

and described by writers under different appellations, and for reasons which I shall hereafter mention.

Of the Character of the Disease.

THE person is affected, first with a langour, or sense of debility, a weariness like what is felt after great fatigue; soreness of the muscles, an aversion to motion, and a sluggishness and uneasiness in exerting it. The patient frequently yawns, and stretches his limbs; there is a paleness of the face and hands; a sensation of cold alternating with sudden and uncertain flushings of heat; the features shrink, and the bulk of the external parts of the body is diminished, attended with a loss of appetite, an aversion to food, sickness and sometimes vomiting: These are accompanied with an heaviness and dejection of spirit, anxiety, inquietude and frequent sighing. At this time there is a pain and giddiness in the head, great trembling, a frequent, weak and unequal pulse, anxious and oppressive respiration, with a sense of tightness and oppression about

the præcordia, attended sometimes with a cough. The person is commonly restless and cannot sleep, though sometimes very drowsy and heavy; and although he appears to bystanders to be actually sleeping, he is insensible of it, and often denies that he was so.

In this condition the patient often continues for five or six days, without an aggravation of all the symptoms, especially towards night*. As the disease continues, the symptoms which we have enumerated, increase, while others, next to be described, come on.

The giddiness, pain, and heaviness of the head, are often attended with a noise in it, termed *Tinnitus Aurium*; at this time there is great sensibility to light and noise, the skin is hot and dry; the tongue grows dry and parched, especially in the middle; and trembles very much when the patient attempts to put it out; partial cold sweats frequently come out on the forehead and backs of the hands, while the cheeks and palms are dry and hot; the urine is passed limpid and pale, the person grows faint

* *Huxham on Fevers, Chap. vii. page 75.*

when he attempts to sit up, an incoherence in mental operation, and at length a confusion of thought and action takes place ; the sick falters in his speech, appears in a dozing state, often picking the bedclothes, and continually muttering to himself, and when roused he sometimes thinks he is surrounded by *muscæ volitantes*, little flies or small bodies floating in the Chamber, but soon falls again into an insensible state.

In the course of the disease the sweats become more profuse, cold and clammy, a diarrhœa often happens, the pulse becomes so weak and quick as scarcely to be distinguished, while the muscles tremble and are frequently moved by feeble convulsive motions, which are termed *subfultus tendinum*. The sick is unable to move his limbs or turn himself in bed, and is continually slipping down in it : at this time excoriations of the parts on which he lies, especially of his hips, are common.

In this insensible stupid state, he is scarcely affected with the loudest noise or strongest light ; though at the beginning of the disease he was very sensible to both ; he gnashes his teeth ; the

tears, urine, and stools, run off involuntarily; the extremities become cold, and he appears to be continually *choaking* or *hiccuping*, is affected with general tremblings and convulsions, to which succeed a profound coma, and lastly death.

Besides the symptoms just enumerated it is proper that I should take notice of some others, which frequently occur, and which, when appearing, have led physicians of great eminence to believe, that a disease was constituted very different, both as to the causes and method of cure, from the one I have attempted to describe.

When the symptoms already mentioned increase more rapidly: When the heat and thirst seem to be greater, and the tongue and teeth more furred, when blood happens to issue from the pores of the skin or anus, but more especially from the nose and gums; and when the stools, urine, sweat, and breath of the patient are very fetid and offensive, the disease then gets the name of Synochus or Putrid Fever.†

† *It is difficult, says Dr. Cullen, to assign the limits between Synochus and Typhus "and I am disposed to believe that the Synochus arises from the same causes as Typhus and is therefore only a variety of it" Practice of Physic. Chap iii. p. 70 sec. lxix.*

If to the symptoms described, black, livid, dun, or greenish spots should happen to appear, the disease has taken the name of Petechial† but, if after a profuse sweating, a small white or red eruption should break out, which sometimes happens, the disease is then called the Miliary Fever, when the disease attacks a great number of persons, and proves very fatal, it is denominated Malignant.§ When it appears amongst soldiers, it is called the Camp; when it happens in a prison, the Jail; and when in an infirmary, the Hospital Fever.

I consider all these different denominations of fevers one and the same disease, differing only in degree, which affords, to be sure, some inessential difference in the phenomena, but none, either in the cause or method of cure. Nay I will not stop here, but venture an opinion, that the Yellow Fever of the West-Indies, the Angina Ulcerosa of Dr. Fothergill, the Puerperal Fever, the Typhus Pestilens of authors, and the Plague, are only varieties or different degrees of the same disease, to which I have

† *Huxham on Fevers, Chap. viii. page 93.*

§ *Monro on Military Hospitals.*

given the name of the *Febris Asthenica Gravis*|| or the Severe Asthenic Continued Fever, comprehending under that general appellation all the distinctions already mentioned. I shall, therefore, constantly hereafter, employ the term Severe Asthenic Continued Fever, with a view to its proximate cause, and intend to include all the phenomena, or symptoms comprehended in the several disorders, known and described by different writers by the names of Typhus, Synochus, Petechial, Miliary, Malignant, Camp, Jail, Hospital and Yellow Fevers, as also the putrid Sore Throat and the Plague.

Therefore, little anxious about enquiring into the particular causes of all the symptoms which have been enumerated, I will proceed to enquire into the causes of the disease in general; for I consider the study of symptomatology, or the explication of symptoms, far less useful, than the one we are next to engage in, and altho' I should not be able to offer a new idea on the subject, yet I believe it is sometimes of advantage to science and improvement, to throw doubts in their way.

|| I add *Gravis* to distinguish it from *Intermittents*.

Of the Causes.

THE Severe Asthenic Continued Fever is frequently epidemic, and hence it has generally been supposed, that some matter floating in the atmosphere and applied to the bodies of men, ought to be considered as the most common cause of it. The matter has been denominated effluvia or contagion, it is supposed to arise from infected clothes, or the body of a person labouring under the same kind of a disease.

That the bodies of men, when crouded in a confined place, but more especially when labouring under a febrile disease, have a power of generating a noxious effluvia, and that such effluvia may adhere to clothing, especially woollen or cotton, and afterwards affect a sound person, I will not positively deny.

It is true, that when men have been crouded together in a jail, hospital, prison-ship, &c. they have contracted fevers of the character of which I am writing; but whether the fever arose from any peculiar matter generated by the men's bodies, or whether it arose from a deficiency of

pure atmospheric air, with other debilitating powers co-operating; such as a want of good wholesome food and drink, too much filth and dirt, fear, grief, &c. appears to me to be very doubtful. But it may be asked; what proof have we then of the contagion of the small pox or measles? I answer, we have positive proof; as nothing for example, but the matter or effluvia, arising or taken from the body of a person, labouring under the small pox, will produce that specific disease: but this is not the case with the disorder I am considering, for we have many indubitable testimonies to prove, as I shall hereafter shew, that fear and cold and a variety of other causes have produced the disease, when there was not even a suspicion that contagion had been applied. However, to avoid argument, I will admit, that a noxious matter or contagion may be generated by the body of a man under a particular disease, and when applied to a sound person may communicate to him a similar complaint. It will, I believe, be admitted, that the origin, and nature of contagion, are involved in great doubts and difficulty, and

as to its operation, all we know about it, we gain from obvious effects: these we find the same as those arising from more certain and more evident causes, we judge, therefore, that the operation of contagion is no wise different from the operation of other powers, as the effects are the same.

The next cause to be mentioned, I think much less doubtful, that is excessive heat.

Heat is one of the most powerful and universal stimulants in nature, and when applied to the human body in a certain measure, it affords that degree of excitement*, necessary to constitute health from that particular stimulus, but when either increased or diminished beyond a certain point, there is no power in nature, capable of diminishing excitement, and of inducing debility and death, more speedily and more certainly. It appears from the most

* I shall make use of terms throughout that perhaps may not be fully understood by every reader, but I presume no medical one will be ignorant of their just meaning; if he should, let him consult Dr. Brown's Elements of Medicine, and he will there find them clearly and elegantly defined.

accurate experiments and observations, that sixty-three degrees of external heat* is the most healthy and agreeable point the human body can possibly be placed in, although the relative degrees of the same power, are established beyond all possibility of doubt†. When the heat of any body therefore is diminished considerably below sixty-three degrees, we then say such a body is cold, meaning thereby that it is deprived of the agreeable quantity of heat, and when applied in this condition to the human body, it has the power of lessening the excitement, and with this the strength and vigour of the whole system, and that in exact proportion to its diminution, even to death itself. Cold therefore has been justly considered, as one of the causes of the Severe Asthenic Continued Fever‡. Beside cold, there are other powers, such as fear and grief, intemperance in drinking, excessive evacuations, night watchings,

* *When I speak of the degrees of heat, I mean as measured by Fahrenheit's Thermometer.*

† *Dr. Gibbon's Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Medicine.*

‡ *Cullen's Practice of Physic, chap. iv.*

excessive venery§, all of which lessen the vigour and weaken the system, and are common causes of this disease.

Of the Proximate Cause.

IF we may be allowed to judge from the universal and general operation of the powers productive of this disease, but more certainly from the symptoms attending it, and still more certainly from the remedies, which have been found most effectual in removing it, I would say that its proximate cause consists in a diminution of healthy excitement over the whole system, or in a state of debility: That this is really the case appears evident from the general phenomena accompanying it; I will give a concise view of them as proofs of what I assert, and at the same time will explain such symptoms as admit of a more particular explication. I judge it unnecessary to enter into any arguments to prove that the doctrine of spasm, which has been generally received, is incompatible with

§ *Immoderata seminis profusio non tantum utilissimi humoris jactura, sed ipso etiam motu convulsivo, quo emittitur, frequentius repetito, imprimis lædit.*

Gaubii. Patholog. sec. 562.

truth, and irreconcilable to reason ; this would extend the work far beyond what seems to me to be necessary. Such of my readers as wish to see that false fabric of medical learning fully demolished, I must refer to the writings of the illustrious Dr. Brown||, in them they may receive ample satisfaction, and save me the trouble and pains of writing.

But to return.

What can prove debility more clearly than is manifested by the langour and lassitude of the patient in the onset of the disease ? Do not the want of appetite¶, vomiting, frequent weak tremblings, coldness of the extremities, cold clammy sweats, weakness and slowness of the pulse*, frequent sighing, inability to walk or even to sit up, or turn the body in bed, as the disease continues, all prove the

|| Particularly his observations.

¶ The cause of appetite in health, depends upon the strong and vigorous contraction of the muscular fibres of the stomach, and the emptiness of that organ ; but when the fibres are feebly and weakly contracted, the gastric fluid improperly secreted, and the stomach unable to digest or evacuate its contents, we have then anorexia or a want of appetite.

* Both depend on the want of a sufficient quantity of blood to stimulate the heart and larger arteries to stronger contractions.

same thing ? And towards the end, are not convulsions, deafness, loss of sight, blood issuing from different parts of the body, great fœtor of the breath, stools, and urine, livid spots upon different parts, or a yellow suffusion over the whole of the skin, asthenic swellings and inflammations appearing in different parts of the body, paralysis of particular muscles, total insensibility and death, indubitable proofs of the debility of the whole system ?

Presuming therefore that debility, or a weakened state of the body, is the immediate or proximate cause of the disease I have been describing, the general indication of cure should be to strengthen and invigorate the system by every means in our power, and to fulfill that purpose, the following plan should be carefully and diligently pursued.

Of the Method of Cure.

WHEN a person is affected with the Severe Asthenic Continued Fever, he should be removed as soon as possible to a well ventilated chamber, the heat of which should be kept constantly between sixty-three and seventy degrees ;

his bed should be made as easy and as comfortable as circumstances will admit of.

If the patient should complain of great oppression, or, as is commonly expressed, a load, heat, pain, and sickness of his stomach, and has previously ate much solid or indigestible food; or if the climate or season should be such, as to favour an abundant secretion of bile, and the contents of the stomach have not been fully ejected by nature, vomiting should be excited by art. For this purpose ipecacuanha or tartar emetic may be used: the former I believe preferable.

After the vomiting is finished, a dose of liquor laudanum should be administered.

If the bowels of the patient should happen to be costive, the only remedy to be used to remove that complaint, is some mild laxative medicine, or what is perhaps preferable, frequent tepid injections; on the contrary, if neither indigested matter nor bile be suspected of oppressing the patient's stomach, nor costiveness his bowels; neither vomiting nor purging should be excited by art, as both these opera-

tions from whatever cause they may be produced are highly debilitating powers, and as such never fail to increase the cause of the disease.

Therefore, after having the sick placed in as comfortable and easy a posture as possible, with the heat of the apartment regulated as I have already recommended, the cure should commence by giving him small doses of opium in some way or other : The liquidum laudanum is perhaps the best form.

Physicians differ widely in their opinions concerning the nature, operation, and effects of opium, but they seem generally to agree that it is a very useful and important remedy in the various forms and stages of the disease of which I am writing. It must be admitted, indeed, that till very lately, opium has been considered rather as a palliative remedy, than one suited to remove the cause of the disease; but since the opinions and writings of the immortal Bruno have become more generally known and considered, and Physicians have paid more attention to this important article of the *Materia Medica*, its operation and effects remain no longer doubtful.

Opium is one of the most powerful stimulants that the history of medicine affords, and as such it is well suited to remove the cause of the disease in question. It should be given in a liquid form in preference to any other, not only as in that way it will act more suddenly, but in general be freer from impurities of any kind that might oppress or nauseate the patient's stomach.

The best way of administering opium in this disease, is as already observed in the form of liquidum laudanum, beginning by giving ten or fifteen drops in some warm and agreeable cordial, and repeating the dose every three or four hours, until ease and a certain degree of excitement are procured, after which the operation should be kept up by renewing the dose occasionally ; but as soon as the patient's stomach is able to bear the more natural stimulus of wine or distilled spirits*, their use should immediately commence, by administering either the one or the other in small potions at first, frequently

D

** I call wine and distilled spirits natural stimuli, and for the propriety of the appellation, I rest on the authority of a very judicious and ingenious teacher of medicine.*

repeating them, and increasing the quantity at every succeeding dose. As the quantity of the natural stimuli is increased, that of the laudanum should be diminished, but never entirely withheld for any length of time until that degree of excitement, strength, or vigour of the system is restored, as will enable the patient to desire, take, and digest the more durable stimulus of food†.

It has been found that laudanum acts more agreeably and quicker when warm than when cold‡; it ought therefore always to be given in that state.

In the exhibition of opium, regard should always be had to the age, sex, and habit of the patient. Forty drops of liquidum laudanum I consider as a moderate quantity to be taken in twelve hours by an adult but little accustomed to it, nor should the nature of the debility constituting the cause of the disease, overlooked. If it be of the direct kind, the opium will operate with greater force, and I

† See Dr. Brown's *Elements of Medicine*.

‡ See Dr. Leigh's *Experiments on Opium*.

may observe here that the same will happen, to all the stimuli I am hereafter to mention, and hence less should be administered at first, than as if the debility was of a different or of the indirect kind.

The next most useful and important remedy is wine or distilled spirits of some kind or other. When the former is preferred, and perhaps it will be in general, I would advise good old Madeira or genuine Port, when the latter the patient's former habit should be consulted, and that kind given him that he was before accustomed to.

The wine may be given pure, but the spirits should be diluted with water, and sweetened if more agreeable to the patient's stomach; they should be given warm, and if spiced they will be more efficacious.

Musk is a stimulus of considerable efficacy, and in some instances, as when the patient has a troublesome singultus or hiccapping, it may be used with advantage, but opium will in general supersede the necessity of its use.

The same may be said of camphor.

The vitriolic æther is a very high and agreeable stimulus, but it is too diffusible to be of general utility in this disease; it however may be occasionally used with advantage.

The volatile alkali is frequently used, and much recommended by some Physicians, but its operation like that of æther passes off too quickly to be of much service, and if given in large quantities may produce purging, an effect which ought to be avoided, besides it is an unnatural stimulus, and as such it may diminish the general excitement of the system, so that I think it may with propriety be laid aside in order to give place to a less doubtful remedy.

I have already observed, that as soon as the patient's stomach craves, or can bear any food, it should be administered, and in such a form as that it will most probably be retained and digested, and of such a nature as to afford a great quantity of nourishment in a small bulk. Fresh animal soups are well calculated to fulfil

that purpose. They should be given warm, well seasoned with salt and pepper and without any fat or greasy matter. The best way is to begin by giving a spoonful at a time, and encreasing the quantity as the patient's stomach is able to bear it, and that this organ may be rendered more capable of performing the important office of digestion, the natural diffusible stimuli should be thrown in, at the same time, taking care not to extend their operation so far as to induce indirect debility.

Beside the remedies recommended, there are others of no less importance in the cure of the disease.

The operation of the mind has a powerful influence on the body. Hence the uncertainty of life and the fear of death, is a very powerful means of diminishing the excitement of the system in general, and ought in this disease to be carefully guarded against||. The patient's mind ought to be inspired with hope as to the curable nature of his disease, and with joy that he has an attentive and skilful physician admini-

|| *Dr. Gibbon's Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Medicine.*

stering to his relief. The nurse or attendants ought to be careful and soothing to the sick, and entirely obedient to the physician, and every means should be contrived to raise the hope and confidence of the sufferer.

That quantity of light, which excites neither pain nor uneasiness, should be admitted. Would beautiful or agreeable objects presented to the sick, be of advantage in the cure of the disease.

The patient should be kept free from noise; except agreeable sounds or soft harmonious music; and how far those ought to be admitted, I am unable to determine.

It is well known to physicians, that when a patient in this disease, has been just falling into a delirium, that by admitting a stronger light, or by a person speaking to him, he has imme-

¶ *I believe good physic and good advice have often failed of success, not only in this, but in most other diseases, for want of being properly administered. Nurses are very apt to take it into their heads that they know as much about curing a disease as the Doctor, and hence his potions and directions are frequently thrown aside or neglected, while their ignorant and absurd notions are put into full practice at the imminent risque of the patient's life.*

diately been roused from his approaching insensibility.

The patient's chamber should be kept free from all ferid, nauseous, and excrementitious matter. ? What advantage might be obtained by fragrant agreeable odours.

The bed clothes and body linen should be frequently changed, and the body bathed in warm spirit (or brandy and water) taking care that his linen be perfectly dry, and his body well wiped after the application*.

Few things destroy the strength equal to perpetual watching. Sleep is the sick man's elysium, it is the state he most desires, and as it sustains his hopes, it prevents delirium and convulsions, and refreshes and recruits the strength and vigour of his system. To procure it, therefore, is of great consequence ; and if the general plan which I have recommended for the cure

* I have been informed by a physician of experience, that bathing the body with equal parts of brandy and water about milk warm, and giving a dose of laudanum, is one of the most powerful means of checking those profuse sweatings which harrass and debilitate patients so excessively in this disease.

of the disease, be strictly followed, I apprehend, refreshing sleep will in general be a natural consequence. Dr. Fordyce†, speaking of the means of procuring sleep in putrid fevers, says, “ That opium given with lemon juice, one or two grains of the one with a spoonful of the other, has such wonderful effects as to deserve the character of a cure wrought by the hand of God, when every other remedy has failed ;” and he further says, “ That Sir William Duncan, by giving him one hundred and seven drops of laudanum, cured him (Dr. Fordyce) of a delirium under which he had laboured for four days, in a miliary fever.”

It is of consequence that strict attention be paid to the excretions by stool and urine, to obviate costiveness, if it should happen, in the way I have already recommended, and to check diarrhoea by the proper remedy. I was led to this observation by a circumstance which I have either read or heard has actually happened, I mean that by an accumulation of urine, and

† *On Fevers*, page 165.

from the inennumerable state of the patient and inattention of the physician, the bladder has actually been bursted, and the contents discovered upon dissection in the cavity of the abdomen; if therefore the urine should not be passed daily, nor can be made to pass by rousing the sick, nor by making a noise imitative of passing it, as by pouring water from a tea kettle, &c. a catheter should be introduced to obviate what may possibly happen, and when happening may put it out of our power to remedy:

When the disease affects one part more than another, as happens to the throat, in that form of it termed cynanche maligna, or to the glands in that disease denominated the plague, besides the general method of cure already recommended, some attention should be paid to the suffering part, in order to prevent a general or universal affection, producing or degenerating into a local one. Therefore warm stimulating gargles and other applications of a similar nature, should be occasionally used, but what are best suited for

this purpose, I confess I am at a loss to determine.

When the disease begins to go off, the patient should increase the quantity of the durable, and diminish the quantity of the diffusible stimuli, especially the less natural ones, until his strength shall be so far restored as to enable him to use gestation, or exercise: When this is accomplished, there will be little fear of a relapse, provided care is taken to avoid debilitating powers; such as contagion, cold, excessive venery, night watching, blood letting, purging, vomiting, grief, fatigue, eating indigestible or but weakly stimulating vegetable food, taking cold watery drinks, and lastly, suffering the mind to be oppressed by anxiety, fear, or grief.

I am well aware that it will be thought that I have neglected mentioning in the cure of the disease, a remedy of great and general utility, that is blistering, I confess that therein I am not quite satisfied. I could produce the testimonies of many respectable medical practitioners, both ancient and modern, to prove not only the inu-

tility, but the actual disservice of blisters in this disease†. I have also omitted recommending the use of the peruvian bark, because I conceive it to be a very weak and inefficacious remedy— Besides when given in substance, it is apt to excite nausea, and frequently vomiting, effects which ought to be carefully guarded against in this disease.

I have no prejudice, nor have I taken the pains and trouble to write from vanity, it was from an ardent desire that truth in the science of medicine may be discovered, and that thereby we may be better able to preserve the health and increase the happiness of mankind.

† See *Tiffot de Febris Biliosa*, Bagliivi *Van Sweeten*, or *Boerhaave's seventy-fifth aphorism*, *Carol, Richa on the putrid fever of Turin*, and *Fordyce on fevers*, page 146, 148—The latter writer, speaking on this subject, observes, “ That it is really shocking to see the manner in which the sick are thrown upon the rack in most fevers, by having their heated and agitated bodies almost embalmed with blister plaisters, and that he protests against their application in every fever with loose blood and putrid symptoms—See *Fordyce on Fevers*, page 172.

